Unexpected Jesus Series Week 4: Unexpected Peace
Sunday November 8th 2025

For the last number of weeks, we have been taking a close and intentional look at Jesus. And I have to tell you that as we've done this I have had these moments where I felt Jesus right here with us saying "yes yes, and…?" as if every lid we take off of the boxes we've tried to keep Jesus in brings a smile to the holy one's face and we are encouraged to keep going. Not in a way that deconstructs or diminishes our faith but in a way that makes it bigger, stronger, and ever more encompassing.

Today we are called to look at Jesus as the *Prince of Peace* and maybe you're thinking what's so unexpected about that? I mean, of course Jesus wants us to live peace filled lives—and we even believe that he came to bring the kind of peace that means one day we'll no longer have to take a deep breath before we check the news. We may still be waiting, but ultimately, we believe that, through Jesus, God opened the door for peace to come to this earth. For divisions to be melted, for hatreds to dissolve, for wars to cease, for swords to be beaten into ploughs, for children to be tucked into their beds at night with full bellies and no fear. Even if Jesus Christ: Prince of Peace doesn't get it's own heading in the index of Voices United or More Voices like Jesus Christ: Kingship, Conqueror, Jesus Christ: Saviour, or Jesus Christ: Shepherd or even Jesus Christ: Light do, —it's still a familiar and expected way to think of Jesus—especially on a Remembrance Sunday.

In this faith we can pray: "Through Christ, O God, soften the hard hearts of tyrants and open the way to peace." Not a bad prayer as far as prayers go but also not one that asks or expects anything from us. It places all the peacemaking responsibility on God. But something about that just doesn't feel right, does it?

I do admit that most of the time I don't have a lot of extra energy, certainly not for peacemaking. Most of the time I feel like I'm just hanging on for dear life, praying that we make it through the next crisis as unscathed as possible. But it's a bit naive to think that the peace Jesus calls us to is the kind of peace that will descend from heaven like a gift we simply have to unwrap and enjoy. The unexpected part of this peace is that we must play a role in bringing it to life, and I have a feeling this is going to take a lot of energy, time, hard work, a significant amount of stubbornness, a bit of sacrifice, and a whole lot of faith. All things we honour intentionally around Remembrance Day. These poppies are a visible reminder of the way our ancestors did all of this, and more, so that we might gather here, peacefully, now. That didn't just happen. Peace took work.

While it changes with each translation, the word peace appears in our Bible over 400 times. Probably the most common definition of peace is "the absence of war" but the Hebrew word for peace is "Shalom" and its definition is vast. This is more than a superficial experience, more than the resolving of global conflict. Instead, the word Shalom implies a broad sense of *wholeness*. I read this week that an accurate translation of Shalom, or peace, would be "nothing missing, nothing broken". Imagine that for a minute. What would your life look like, feel like, if nothing was missing and nothing was broken? What would our families look like? Our community? Our world? Sounds like heaven, doesn't it?

As we've been leaning heavily on Sarah Bessey's wisdom these past few weeks I checked in with her and found that she wrote:

> I have grown to love Theologian Osheta Moore's explanation of shalom as: "the breadth, depth, climate, and smell of the Kingdom of God… the counter-story, with nothing missing and nothing lost for everyone who reads it…. We, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, catch glimpses of shalom and pull our friends to stand in our line of vison so that they too can see the beauty of the kingdom, shalom is what happens when the love of God meets our most tender places."

I believe with all my heart that this is the very reason the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us un the first place. That the shalom of God would meet us in our most tender places. But I am coming to understand that it won't happen, this abiding peace won't be seen in our time, if we don't help make it happen, if we don't stand up against the powers of the world, those voices that profit from the conflicts (the massive global ones and the ones that fester when we are told to mistrust our neighbours).

Author and contemporary philosopher bell hooks wrote:

> dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences, this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community."

Moving through that fear and making room for the peace of Christ to take root…that's worth working hard for.

I'm not sure how many of you were tied to your screens on Tuesday night. It's odd really that the mid term election of another country would have us holding our breath, but such is the world we live in now. Naturally I won't go into my personal political views here…I assume you all know where I stand anyway…what I did want to point out was what happened in the watch room of newly elected Senator James Talariko where his campaign workers had gathered. CBC just happened to be live with them when their state flipped…people laughed, and danced, and then they started weeping. In real time I sat there watching them come to the realization that their hard work, their dedication to truth telling, their devotion to a democratic system was successful. When one woman was asked by a reporter, "Can you believe it?" and she responded with "Yes of course I can believe it! We worked really hard for this." Another said "I'm thrilled. Also, I'm exhausted".

Now these people weren't fighting a war in the traditional sense of the word but in their own way they were trying to end a few, and they worked really hard to do so. I think the unexpected thing about the Peace of Christ is that it requires hard work and if we do it right, we will be exhausted, thrilled, but exhausted, when that peace finally arrives.

Bessey says:

> learning to practice meaningful peacemaking in community has been uncomfortable and hard and also the best work of my life…. The invitation to peacemaking is always present to us. We're learning to make the rooms of our own hearts ready for hope and for peace. We try to remember to pray for our enemies and to love our neighbours and to practice these ways of Jesus as if he meant them—because I have a hunch he did mean them…. I know that shalom is communal. That it has to happen together or not at all…. Our lives become outposts of shalom, holy signs along the path, giving a lost and broken and unhealthy world a glimpse of the abundant life that we have found in Jesus. (pg. 191 Miracles and other Reasonable Things)

The thing that strikes me this week, as we honour this time of Remembrance Day is how much our own participation is required. Jesus never said "here's peace, now go and feel peaceful by yourself in that corner over there". Rather his gift of peace was always, remains to this day, a call to action.

As the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed generations ago "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the *messenger* who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."" (Isaiah 52).

We are not passive witnesses to this peace, we are lead characters, we are disciples. Christ needs our hands and our feet, our hearts and our minds, essential tools in how this peace will or will not unfold in this world. Our inaction is not an option anymore. We must speak up, bravely and boldly, messengers of compassion and grace and mercy, proclaiming the peace our God offers that, yes, passes all understanding, but also, is the very thing that pushes us forward, that rules our hearts and guides our steps.

As Bessey wrote "you are always invited to be in on what God is doing among us and to be part of the new way of life".

This Remembrance Day, as give thanks for the peace we know, may recommit to working very hard to keeping it. Amen.